

DHS OUTREACH

2004 Summer Issue

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From the Desk of the DHS Director ...

I am pleased to welcome you to the first edition of the *DHS Outreach*, our quarterly online newsletter developed to inform stakeholders about both the existence and achievements of vital programs that help uplift low-income District residents. DHS social services are designed to guide eligible residents towards responsible and beneficial productivity and self-sufficiency.

In short, District residents should know that DHS provides access to temporary cash assistance, food, shelter, medical care, early child care, services for at-risk families, adult protective services, refugee services, an array of services for persons with a mental or physical disability, and services for juvenile delinquents. DHS also works to help reduce poverty and family violence, and provides services to assist fathers and encourage literacy.

DHS has much to be proud of. Our Income Maintenance Administration, Family Services Administration, Office of Early Childhood Development, and Rehabilitation Services Administration are among the best in the country. In addition, our Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration and Youth Services Administration are undergoing substantial reform to ensure high quality care and services for the mentally retarded and for juvenile delinquents.

Please look forward to receiving the DHS Outreach online newsletter to learn about social services delivery in the District of Columbia and to read some compelling stories about residents who have benefited from DHS programs. In this way you will come to know and understand that DHS is Uplifting Lives!



Yvonne Gilchrist

www.dhs.dc.gov

Please direct your comments about the *DHS* newsletter to **Outreach!**



First in DC Metro Area: DC's *Answers, Please!* 211 Call Center Begins Operations This Fall

In October 2004, District residents will be able dial 211 for social services information and referrals provided through the Department of Human Services' (DHS) *Answers, Please!* social services information and referral call center. In 2003, the DC Public Service Commission approved DHS' application for *Answers, Please!* to be designated as the 211 call center for the District of Columbia. As a result, the District has the first call center in the Washington Metropolitan Region to earn approval for the 211 Dial Code for social services information.

The Federal Communications Commission designated 211 as the national abbreviated Dial Code for free access to health and human services information and referral. Established 211 call centers are already in place in many regions of the United States. *Answers, Please!* has operated successfully since 1999, maintains a database of nearly 2,000 government and private sector programs, and has handled more than 200,000 calls. District residents currently reach *Answers, Please!* by calling (202) 463-6211.

For Social Services Information



Department of Human Services

www.answersplease.dc.gov

MRDDA Clients on Path to Grammys

The Department of Human Services Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration (MRDDA) has some clients who may be taking home a Grammy next year.

The Inspirational Choir and Moroccan Ensemble, a part of



the Art and Drama Therapy Institute, Inc. (ADTI), is gaining recognition in the music industry and has set out on a quest to capture a Grammy. The ensemble recently recorded an original song (titled "Let Us Fly") composed by international acclaimed musician Broto Roy and recorded by Christopher Murphy, a sound engineer who has worked with such Grammy grabbers as Barbara Streisand and is a

nominating member of the Grammy Awards. Murphy was so impressed with the finished product that he is submitting a bid for the group to receive a nomination.

ADTI is a medically supervised day treatment facility that uses art, music, movement and drama as an innovative approach to therapeutic care and treatment for adults with mental retardation as well as multiple physical and behavioral challenges. The program's goal is to enable its clients to discover and cultivate their unique talents, skills and strengths to help them to become contributing members of the community.

"This is one of the most unique and amazing programs with which we partner," said MRDDA Administrator Dale Brown. "Many of the clients have made the most amazing transformation. When they perform, it is as if their disability literally disappears."

The 16-member choir, led by director Darion Gates, sings a variety of gospel and popular tunes. On a recent visit to hear the choir rehearse, DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist, Deputy Director Vanessa Chappell-Lee and others leapt to their feet after hearing the choir's rendition of Sammy Davis Jr.'s "Candy Man" and Al Green's "For the Good Times." The anchors of the choir—Brian Slaughter, who sings and plays keyboards and Kevin Christian, the main soloist—perform with the gusto of seasoned entertainers.

DHS Youth Services Administration Undergoes Transformation: Mayor, City Administrator and DHS Director Spur Juvenile Justice System Reforms

Delivering on a promise to place reform of the District's juvenile justice system on a fast track, City Administrator Robert Bobb recently released a report entitled, *A Blueprint for Tomorrow: Transforming Juvenile Services and Program Delivery in the District of Columbia*. The report details major top to bottom changes to take place at the Youth Services Administration (YSA) and the Laurel, Maryland-based Oak Hill Youth Detention Center, both part of the DC Department of Human Services (DHS).

Significant changes are expected in areas such as management and performance, accountability, youth services and treatment plans, and community-based services. The report also addresses building a new facility at Oak Hill and notes the upcoming Fall opening of YSA's new state-of-the art detention center at Mount Olivet Road.

City Administrator Bobb took keen, hands-on interest in the troubled YSA not long after his tenure started in October 2003, just as DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist had done upon her arrival in June 2003. Mayor Williams appointed Gilchrist as chairperson of his Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force in November 2003 shortly after Bobb, with a green light from Mayor Williams, announced the challenge of improving YSA and Oak Hill. Bobb appointed Marceline Alexander as interim administrator of YSA, while the District government continued a nationwide search for a new administrator.

Marceline Alexander and YSA Interim Special Counsel Mark Back worked against a tight deadline to identify problems at YSA and Oak Hill and to develop and recommend solutions, which were compiled into the "Blueprint" report, completed by the end of May 2004 as Bobb promised.

Major focus on YSA and Oak Hill occurred following a series of Washington Post articles in July 2003. According to these accounts, youths in YSA's care had absconded from community-based group and shelter homes with which YSA had contracted to provide alternative services for them. The articles noted issues with the condition and management of several group and shelter homes where youths released from Oak Hill were housed. The "Blueprint" report points out that YSA has since instituted measures to ensure that these homes are inspected and monitored, are fit to serve youths, and licensed.

YSA requires that all group and shelter homes adhere to licensing requirements in order to continue serving youths in its care. YSA will begin processing licensure applications for all existing and new group and shelter home providers in July 2004. It is also working aggressively to identify available funding opportunities to increase community programs for detained and committed youths.

"We are working to rebuild YSA into a far more efficient and comprehensive administration bent on delivering high quality, best practice juvenile justice system services designed to assist and strengthen at-risk, detained and committed youths," said Bobb. "And it will happen much sooner than later. It is one of the Mayor's top priorities."

DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist's role as Chairperson of Mayor Williams' Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force has been to actively lead and manage the 18 member Task Force as it pursues its mission of implementing Mayor Williams' vision of "creating a fully unified juvenile justice system in the District that treats children as children, protects public safety, and delivers seamless services to youths and their families through local and federal collaborative, system-wide efforts."

"Bet You Didn't Know!" Community Information Fairs Kick Off

The Information Fairs will be held on Saturdays, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, at the following locations:

August 28

Edgewood Terrace at 635 Edgewood Street, NE

September 25

Benning Terrace at 4450 G Street, SE

October 9

River Terrace at 34 and Dix Street, NE

October 16

Marie Reed Learning Center

For more information call DHS **Answers, Please!** at (202) 463-6211.

Office of Early Childhood Development Increases Licensed Childcare Slots for Nights, Weekends and Holidays

The DHS Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) increased the number of licensed non-traditional childcare slots from 215 in 2002 to 1,515 in 2003. There are now 77 licensed childcare providers offering non-traditional hours (evenings, weekends, overnight, and holidays). The District continues to be ranked number one in the United States for the percentage of licensed family childcare homes that are accredited. A total of 18 homes (7.6 percent) in the District are accredited.

The Administration subsidized early care and education services for 18,496 of 31,500 eligible children in the District (58.7%), and established a waiting list for the children of eligible working parents. The District of Columbia serves a higher percentage of eligible children than most states, where the percentage ranges between 12 to 15 percent of eligible children.

OECD served a total of 531 infants and toddlers with developmental delays in FY 2003.

OECD enrolled 6,327 early care and education workers in professional development opportunities and helped a total of 1,339 early care and education providers to pursue higher education at the University of the District of Columbia.

Through OECD's support, 22 early care and education providers earned associate of arts degrees and nine earned master's degrees in Early Childhood Education with a concentration in administration from the University of the District of Columbia. Ninety bilingual persons received Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials in November 2003, and the Administration provided 285 new scholarships for early care and education workers to enroll in this respected credentialing program.

OECD received an \$800,000 Early Learning Opportunities Act grant to promote school readiness and literacy on behalf of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development. The grant funds are used to support training for early care and education providers, parents, public libraries, and volunteers in Wards One, Seven, and Eight to give children the skills they need to be better prepared for school success. The agency also is a major partner of Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) initiative launched by the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). NBCDI received \$4 million from the Kellogg Foundation to better prepare children in Wards One, Seven, and Eight for school.



RSA: Nearly Perfect

The Rehabilitation Services Administration [RSA] administers the Social Security Disability Determination Program, which adjudicates claims for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

In 2003, the program maintained an accuracy rate of 97.0% for adjudication of claims filed by District residents to receive Social Security benefits in both programs. This rate is among the highest in the nation.

"Our success stories often get lost in the midst of the more controversial news of the day, but our record speaks for itself," said Administrator Elizabeth Parker. "RSA is a well functioning agency. We'd like to stop being such a well-kept secret."

In addition to adjudicating SSDI and SSI claims, RSA also assists disabled persons with employment and independent living in the home and community, and prepares its clients to enter the labor market by providing an array of services, including counseling and guidance, employability assessments, physical restoration, vocational training, and job search, placement and retention services. With a staff of fewer than 100, RSA delivers services to approximately 10,000 District residents.

Parker said she wants RSA to reach its consumers while they are still young so they develop more positive attitudes about their future when they become adults.



IMA's Office of Work Opportunity Increases Self-Sufficiency

When programs known as welfare were "mended, not ended" in 1996, governments instituted requirements for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to participate in work, work preparation or study programs.

In the District, staff in the Office of Work Opportunity in the Income Maintenance Administration offer two programs that help TANF applicants not only meet their work requirements, but also develop skills for self-sufficiency.

Job Club and Tuition Assistance Program Initiative for TANF (TAPIT) both help heads of households applying for TANF seek jobs while their applications are under review.

In the Job Club Program, applicants prepare for jobs in the 21st Century through undertaking skills assessments, creating resumes and writing telephone scripts for job searches. TANF applicants also conduct employment search activities through sampling Internet job searches, visiting personnel offices and developing career portfolios.

OWO Program Manager Essie G. Page told Outreach that her staff members "provide prompt, friendly and courteous services. Job Club and all OWO services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner."

When TANF applicants participate in TAPIT, they can obtain up to \$4,000 per academic year in scholarship aid to attend an accredited two or four year institution in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

TAPIT scholarships cover tuition, mandatory fees and books. The funds can be applied to part-time or full-time study, and afford eligible TANF recipients to combine formal education with specific job skills.

According to Page, "this combination can be the key to employment with career advancement possibilities."

To learn more about eligibility requirements and application forms, call **(202) 698-1860**

Neighborhood Services Interventions in Every City Ward

Last March, Ms. Barbara Brown, resident manager and senior community manager of Brandywine Park and Frederick Douglass Gardens Apartments, together with Department of Human Services (DHS) Neighborhood Services Program Core Team members, brainstormed numerous ways that the agency could impact the lives of residents of the troubled area in Ward Eight.

The area, Yuma/Brandywine, is a "Hot Spot," among sections of the District designated by City Administrator Robert Bobb for crisis intervention through quality of life improvement activities, and coordinated through Metropolitan Police Department, DHS and numerous other District government agencies.

In July, DHS held a ribbon cutting and open house for Brandywine Park, in an apartment it renovated and furnished at 736 Brandywine Street, SE. Katie Shephard, community outreach specialist for DHS and a Core Team member, hosted the event and will convene on-going workshops including Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, and Parenting and Self-Esteem Workshops for Teens and TANF Mothers. "This is an effort to bring needed services directly to the community," Ms. Shephard said.

This is just one of many intervention programs Neighborhood Services instituted or planned for each Ward in the City to impact the lives of District residents in positive ways. "The planned interventions throughout the District are evidence of DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist's foresight in letting the rubber hit the road in our Department," Sandra Wallace, coordinator for the Department's Core Team, told OUTREACH. "The Core Team members are the eyes and ears of DHS, so that when we see a family with a problem, our multi-agency approach helps us solve it."

Team members conduct periodic walk throughs in troubled neighborhoods and survey residents who identify specific problems. As a result of these walk throughs and the residents' survey responses, Core Team members identify projects that can deliver the needed service or program.

For example, DHS partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation to link Late Night Hoops, a sporting event for young adults, with health and human services information and workshops. Through October 22, basketball players between ages 18 and 25 can play from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am every Friday night. Prior to each game, the health and human services agencies will make oral presentations and provide educational and resource material in exhibits and displays.

In Ward One, Core Team members planned a program in the Latino community to help youth learn basic skill trades. This program will include an apprenticeship program to help youth continue to grow their capacities of self-sufficiency.

In Ward Seven, the Team conducted a "Message in the Media" workshop for youth participants of MPD's Operation Prevent Auto Theft Camp, housed at Fletcher Johnson JHS and targeting adolescents in Benning Terrace. The "message," including limits and consequences, decision making and human endangerment," helps to eliminate auto thefts by youngsters as young as seven years.

District-wide, the Team is preparing a database system for ease in capturing, tracking and reporting data from neighborhoods in crisis. Training sessions in technology - related subjects, and seminars in developing marketable job skills and job skills training all are methods the Team uses to build the database--and secure volunteers to manage it.

15 Oak Hill Youths Recruited for "Talented Tenth Program"

Oak Hill Academy at the Oak Hill Youth Detention Center has some very bright teenagers age 14 to 19 who are willing and able to earn a 3.0 and above GPA. In fact, 15 male and female youths, some of whom are detained and others committed, have earned the distinction of being accepted into Oak Hill Academy's Talented Tenth Program (TTP) based on academic achievement. Located on the grounds of the Center, Oak Hill Academy is managed by the DC Public Schools.

The TTP members undergo a series of character initiatives that are devised to improve and uplift their character. The students focus on six main areas of concentration: 1) Social Skills, which looks at their relationships with others and themselves; 2) Decisions, which deals with the importance of making good decisions and how, why, and when; 3) Education, its importance and impact; 4) Communities, which explores a person's responsibility to society and what one brings and takes away; 5) Self-Advocacy, which acknowledges the importance of youth advocates at Oak Hill and in the community; and 6) Skills Training, which helps them to learn how to transfer into everyday life.

"The TTP creed adopted by the students states that its members must respect themselves and others, be socially and politically aware, have a commitment to education, and believe in uplifting their communities," said Michael McLin, coordinator for the Oak Hill Academy TTP.

TTP membership criteria has high expectations. The students must carry themselves in an appropriate manner at all times, maintain a "B" grade average or higher, maintain proper hygiene and adhere to the school dress code at all times. They also must be able to work in a small group and contribute to the whole.

"We are very proud of these kids and we let them know it, said Marceline Alexander, interim administrator of the Youth Services Administration. "They need affirmation of their achievements and we ensure that they receive it."



Life Skills and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workshops Touch Thousands

The Family Services Administration (FSA)'s Teen Parent Assessment Program (TPAP) and several partnering agencies reached more than 2,300 District youth through educational workshops held across the District. The programs celebrated the observance of the collaboration's Sixth Annual Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month Campaign in May.

This year's campaign featured 19 workshops that focused on preventing teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, promoting healthy self-esteem, developing personal responsibility, practicing goal setting, and staying in school.

TPAP workshops were held at public schools, community organizations, and health care centers, including Ballou Senior High School, the Latin American Youth Center and Riverside Hospital, among other locations. Please contact Martina D. Nicholson on (202) 541-3906 or Constance Wilcher on (202) 541-3909, to schedule a workshop or for more information.

DHS Administrators at Your Service



Ricardo Lyles

Family Services Administration (FSA)
(202) 541-3921

Programs

Adult Protective Services; Family Violence Prevention Services; Teen Parent Assessment Program; Refugee Resettlement Services; Homeless Services; Community Services Block Grant; Strong Families Services Division

Kate Jesberg

Income Maintenance
Administration (IMA)
(202) 698-3900

Programs

TANF and related employment services; Food Stamps and related employment services; Medicaid; Interim Disability Assistance; Burial Assistance; General Assistance for Children; Refugee Cash Assistance



Dale Brown

Mental Retardation and Developmental (MRDDA) Disability Administration
(202) 673-7657

Programs

Case Management Services; Clinical Services; Community-based Service Network; Home and Community-Based Waiver (HCBS); Quality Assurance; Training

Barbara Kamara

Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD)
(202) 727-1839

Programs

Child Care Services Division (CCSD); District of Columbia Early Intervention Program (DCEIP); Program Development Division (PDD)



Elizabeth Parker

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
(202) 442-8663

Programs

DC Business Enterprise For The Blind; Disability Determination Division; Independent Living Services; The State Rehabilitation Council

Marceline Alexander

Interim Administrator
Youth Services Administration (YSA)
(240) 456-5000

Programs

Court & Community Services; Juvenile Intake Services; Juvenile Justice Services; Oak Hill Youth Center

